

INTERAGENCY ADVISORY GROUP

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
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SUMMARY OF 311th MEETING

May 20, 1976

I. Current Legislative Report

Mr. Jacobson introduced Arch S. Ramsay, Director, Bureau of Policies and Standards, who reported on the status of personnel management legislation.

The most recent session of the IAG Legislative Advisory Committee was spent in reviewing the activities of the group over the past year. In general, it was felt that the formation of the group was a good idea, the exchange of information has been useful and that it should continue. Among several suggestions for improving communications between the Commission and the IAG on legislative matters we agreed that more frequent and routine reports should be given at the monthly meetings of the IAG. This is the first of these reports which will probably be given at each meeting, unless there has been a Congressional recess or adjournment and/or there is nothing new to report to the IAG.

Civil Service Reform--The Henderson Bill

The House Post Office and Civil Service Committee has been working on H.R. 12080 for several months. However, the last several sessions scheduled to work on or complete mark-up were not attended by the necessary quorum. The May 15 deadline, set by the new Congressional budget procedures, has passed. Bills containing proposals that require new funding must be reported by that date. In a meeting on May 20, work continued on a clean bill, H.R. 13891. The effective date of section 6, the appeal board, has been set for FY 1978 to allow for the elapsing of the budget deadline. It is expected that the committee will continue mark-up on the bill.

Flexible Hours of Work

By a voice vote, the House passed H.R. 9043 on May 6. The bill reported by the Committee was passed with two amendments from the floor. It establishes a three-year test program to experiment with a full range of flexible and compressed work schedules and calls upon the CSC to develop a master plan for agency experimentation. Participation of agencies will be voluntary and any individual for whom a compressed

schedule would impose a personal hardship will be excused from participation in an approved experiment* In the Senate, Senator Gaylord Nelson introduced a similar bill, S. 3360, after holding hearing on the subject of changing patterns of work in a Labor and Public Welfare subcommittee.

Sunshine Legislation

The House scheduled H.R. 11656 for action the week of May 17, subject to the granting of a rule.

H.R. 11656 would provide for open meetings of all agencies where the collegial body consists of two or more members, require advance notice of meetings, and transcripts of meetings. Meetings may be closed under certain circumstances, but reasons for closing must be published. The Government Operations Committee report makes it clear that certain CSC meetings having to do with labor relations matters should be exempt from the provisions of the bill.

The Senate passed their version, S. 5, several months ago.

"Sunset" bill

The Senate subcommittee has approved S. 2925 (Muskie) that would require all Federal programs to obtain periodic reauthorization from Congress or else go out of business.

- (1) Programs would terminate automatically if they cannot justify continued funding to Congress.
- (2) It would require "zero base" budgeting to be used. Congress would have to consider the effect of providing no funds at all, as well as the impact of funding at reduced, current, or increased levels.

The only programs exempt are retirement and social security programs.

II. Revision of FPM Chapter 430 on Performance Evaluation and Rating

Mr. Ramsay discussed the Civil Service Commission's draft revision of FPM Chapter 430 on Performance Evaluation and Rating.

The pervasive nature of performance evaluation throughout personnel management and the persistent problems associated with it are all too familiar. There have been many efforts to improve the process by Commission and agency management. Several agencies are presently using or developing performance evaluation and improvement programs based on research findings in the behavioral sciences.

For some time, the Civil Service Commission has been drafting a major revision of FPM chapter 430 which deals with performance evaluation and rating. The purpose in preparing this draft is to increase the usefulness

* Compressed work scheduling, or four 10-hour days, does not imply facility closure on the fifth day. Excused employees would maintain their schedules through five days while co-workers select which of four days are worked.

of the chapter by (1) reorganizing existing material to clearly distinguish between requirements and guidance; (2) up-dating the chapter material; and (3) providing additional information and guidance on improving performance evaluation.

The chapter has been organized into two main parts: the body of the chapter covering requirements and an appendix containing guidance. The body of the chapter contains the essentials of the regulatory material, i.e., the requirements agencies must meet to comply with the performance rating provisions in chapter 43, title 5, U.S.C. including performance rating appeals. The chapter also contains related requirements based on the provisions of law, Executive order, regulation, or Commission policy such as those on evaluating supervisors' and managers' EEO performance, training supervisors and managers in evaluation of subordinates' performance, and additional service credit for reduction-in-force purposes. In addition, the chapter covers the relationship of performance evaluation and rating to other personnel decisions such as: within-grade increases for General Schedule and wage grade employees, achievement awards including quality step increase, and adverse action.

There are a number of changes in policy, procedures and regulations in this chapter. They have been made to update instructions, clarify policy on certain points, establish, insofar as possible, appellate rights and procedures which are parallel to other appellate rights and procedures, and provide more complete regulations in part 430. For example:

1. Timing of rating. The rating period is changed from one year for employees GS-10 and below and 18 months for GS-11 and above, to one year for all employees. The grade distinction is artificial for purposes of performance rating. Uniformity of rating period is fairer to all and administratively more efficient.
2. Definitions of rating levels. Definitions are given for ratings of Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory. The definition of an unsatisfactory rating provides that failure to perform satisfactorily in one or more critical job areas is a basis for an Unsatisfactory rating. The definitions serve to clarify this area and help to make application of the ratings more uniform.
3. Ad hoc boards of review. The idea of only ad hoc boards of review for performance rating appeals, rather than optional standing boards, has been proposed before and although acceptable to all concerned was never adopted in the chapter. We believe it is still an appropriate change and have included it in this draft.

The appendix entitled "Guide to Improving Performance Evaluation," provides state-of-the-art information, but presents it from a practical viewpoint. The material is much more comprehensive than any previously provided. It involves a shift in emphasis from procedural mechanisms to opportunities for meaningful dialogue between supervisor and employee. It stresses training of supervisors, employee participation in the evaluation process, and the importance of feedback to and from employees. More up-to-date guidance is provided on techniques for setting performance standards and for guarding against bias in appraisals. The emphasis throughout is on

assisting agencies and supporting their efforts to design and manage their own programs.

The revised chapter will also form the basis of a training course and a training module on performance evaluation for supervisors, managers and personnel people.

At the present time, the chapter draft is in clearance and is expected to go out shortly for comments. Within a few weeks it is expected to be distributed to personnel directors.

III. Selection of Test Agencies for the Federal Personnel Management Information Systems

Mr. Jacobson introduced Dr. Philip A.D. Schneider, Associate Director for Manpower Information, Bureau of Manpower Information Systems, for a presentation on the selection of test agencies for the Federal Personnel Management Information Systems (FPMIS).

Dr. Schneider presented a brief background statement of the major emphases of FPMIS. It is considered to be a Commission-led, but Government-wide development effort. Rather than as a computer system per se, FPMIS should be viewed as a comprehensive approach including: (1) thorough cost-benefit analysis of all personnel management information requirements, (2) data standardization, and (3) modernization and improvement of the personnel processing portions of the FPM. To reflect the Government-wide nature of FPMIS, an FPMIS Users' Group has been established with a membership including agency directors of personnel and CSC bureau directors and heads of staff offices. An important milestone in this agency - CSC partnership has been achieved - the selection of three agencies to participate in FPMIS development and first phase implementation.

Dr. Schneider introduced Lee Hale, Task Manager for FPMIS Test Plans to explain the test agency selection process. The Departments of Air Force, Health, Education and Welfare and the Civil Service Commission have been selected as the test agencies for development, implementation and operational testing of FPMIS. Four employees from each of the test agencies will join the CSC staff (on a reimbursable basis) to participate in the detailed development of the system. As the individual agency will be the operational base of FPMIS, participation of agency representatives in development of FPMIS regulations and procedures is vital to the success of the project. In addition to participating in its development, test agencies will install the test system by modifying their internal personnel and data systems to comply with the new procedures expressed in the revised Federal Personnel Manual.

Mr. Hale then briefly explained the rigorous selection process by which the three test agencies were selected and stated that the complete report of the selection process could be obtained by calling him on telephone number 254-7452. It was particularly important that the total test sample be reasonably representative of Government personnel systems and employees to assure the general applicability of the test results. The selected test agencies do constitute a credible sample (15%) of the Government workforce.

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There is no limit on agency participation in the FPMIS development process. Additional agency participation (which would be less than full-time and non-reimbursable) would be welcomed on the FPMIS Users' Group, the central policy review body for the project or the FPMIS/IAG and its subcommittees on Manpower Statistics, Personnel Processing and Data Standardization which will contribute to FPMIS development decisions in their particular topical areas.

Mr. Hale and the FPMIS Project Manager, Mr. A.T. Green are available to brief agencies' management on FPMIS policy and development plans. Interested agencies should contact Mr. Hale at the above number.

In conclusion, Mr. Jacobson reemphasized the importance of the FPMIS project to the Government and the personnel community.

Mr. Jacobson briefly discussed the Report of the Merit Staffing Review Team -- an inquiry into the Commission's examining and staffing operations -- led by Milton I. Sharon. The report has been made available to personnel directors, to the Congress, the press, and the public. The Commission is in the process of taking action to follow through on the recommendations contained in the report.